

CRANSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE PUBLIC WORK SESSION

DECEMBER 3, 2014

WILLIAM A. BRIGGS BUILDING (REED CONFERENCE ROOM)

845 PARK AVENUE, CRANSTON, RI

EXECUTIVE SESSION 6:00 P.M.

PUBLIC SESSION IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING EXECUTIVE SESSION

**PUBLIC WORK SESSION IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING PUBLIC
SESSION**

MINUTES

The School Committee meeting was held on the evening of the above date at the William A. Briggs Building with the following members present: Chairperson Iannazzi, Mr. Gale, Mrs. Ruggieri Mr. Colford and Mr. Traficante. Mrs. Culhane and Mrs. McFarland were absent during Executive Session. Attorney Cascione was present during Executive Session.

The meeting was called to order at 6:06 p.m. It was moved by Mr. Gale and seconded by Mr. Traficante to convene to Executive Session pursuant to RI State Laws. The roll was called; all were in favor: Mr. Colford – Yes; Mrs. Culhane – Absent; Mr. Gale – Yes; Mrs. McFarland – Absent; Mrs. Ruggieri – Yes; Mr. Traficante – Yes; Ms. Iannazzi Yes:

PL 42-46-5(a)(1) Personnel:

PL 42-46-5(a)(2) Collective Bargaining/Litigation:

A. Contract Negotiations' Update(s)=

B. Secretaries

C. Bus Drivers, Mechanics

D. Tradespeople

PL 42-46-5(3)

A. District Safety Plan

Call to Order at 6:12 p.m. - Public Session

The Roll was called; a Quorum was present.

Executive Session Minutes were sealed – Ms. Iannazzi stated that no votes were taken in Executive Session. A motion was made to seal the minutes of the executive session. Moved by Mr. Traficante; seconded by Mr. Mr. Gale. The roll was called; all were in favor.

Adjourn to Public Work Session at 6:15 p.m.

Versatrans Routing System – Joseph Balducci

Michael Anderson & Michael Grandy from Tyler Technologies presented on their company's transportation management system. They highlighted the following:

- **Bus routing systems and its capabilities**
- **Exact location of the busses**

- **Computer formulated bus routes**
- **GPS Systems in busses**
- **Maximizing bus runs and route efficiency**
- **Ability to track students locations on bus**

Mentoring Program

Arlene McNulty spoke on the Mentoring Program for the students in our schools that are matched up with adults from the community.

She highlighted some of the following:

- **It is a process of developing a trusting relationship between the mentor and mentee**
- **The program builds self esteem and helps with academic achievement**
- **It is a rewarding, volunteer opportunity**
- **The mentors are matched up with students that are on the borderline of dropping out.**
- **The mentors are checked out (BCI, reference checks, etc)**
- **Parental consent is a requirement**

AED Upgrade – Joseph Balducci

Mr. Balducci spoke about the Automatic External Defibrillators (AED) that we presently have in our schools. He stated that most of them have reached their capacity and lifespan and should be replaced. He discussed the areas that do not have them and should, the cost of obtaining new ones and the maintenance of them once we have them.

Audit – Joseph Balducci

Mr. Balducci stated that we ended the year with a budgetary surplus of just under 1.5 million dollars. This was after the Administration

and the School Committee decided to put away \$500,000 in a Capital Reserve Fund. Now from a balance standpoint, we actually have a positive balance in our General Fund. When the audit report is printed and given out to everyone, it shows 1.5 million dollars. I caution you because it is not actually 1.5 million dollars because for presentation purposes, about a half a million dollars has to be shown as part of our Operating Fund. Internally, we will continue to spend separately from that fund, but when the auditors come in they have to roll it up to the General Fund. Out of the 1.5 million, back out a half a million and now you are down to 1 million and of that 1 million, \$300,000 is for reserve money. This means we had set aside dollars against last year's budget, but we did not spend those dollars until this year. The bottom line is our "rainy day fund" has about \$700,000 in it. All the funds had positive results. The Food Service Fund had a \$200,000 surplus last year, which now brings that fund to a positive of just under \$100,000. The Internal Service Health Funds, which we created a couple of years back because of being self insured, that too has a surplus of approximately \$900,000, which brings that fund's balance to approximately 1.4 million.

Coaches Salaries – Raymond Votto

Mr. Votto stated - As you recall, when we settled the contract with the teachers, the coaches' salaries were no longer listed in there. We really do not have a pay structure to go by. I had a discussion with Vin Varrecchione, who went out and did some research. We brought in Joe (Balducci) to do the numbers, which I am passing out now (See Handout "A" on file in the Superintendent's Office).

Vin Varrecchione stated – Basically what Ray (Votto) said is that with us no longer being part of the teachers' contract opened the door for us to make some changes. I went out and looked at neighboring communities and communities of similar size. We are at the middle of the road as far as coaching pay, maybe a little under in some areas. I know our coaches have not received raises for a few years now, as many people have not. It is becoming more and more difficult to find coaches. Every time we put an ad on School Spring, it is amazing how few applicants we get. It is not just Cranston, it is everywhere. It creates competition. If I am a certified coach and I can go to Warwick, Cranston or Providence and make 10% of my base salary in Providence, then guess where I am going. We are not trying to be competitive with Providence, but I wanted it to be a little more competitive with some of the other districts. Some of the other tweaking I did was with the individual sports. We had situation were Cross Country has four meets and the coaches are paid a \$4,300 stipend. We have soccer that has fifteen games away, at night, their practices are 6 days a week and they receive a \$4,200-\$4,300 stipend as well. There is an imbalance. I find that a lot of the other districts make adjustments in those cases. I know North Kingstown, West Warwick and Warwick did. I actually lowered the stipend in some areas. I tried to keep the dollar as close to equal as possible to what we have allocated now and within that I tried to be fair amongst the coaches that have the longer seasons, more games and most participants. Participation is also a big factor. In soccer, 30 girls tried out at Cranston West and we had 12 on the cross country team

and 5 of them didn't show up regularly. It is hard to justify that coach making the same as the other. None of this was done on a whim; it is just some of the things that I have seen over the last several years. Cranston East Golf is almost an oxymoron. I hate to say that as I am a former Cranston East Golf coach years back, but the urban population and the kids that we are getting, we are struggling over there. There are times when we are not playing the maximum numbers for a match, so why do we have golf league when we only have 3-4 kids? We are paying a \$4,300 stipend for a coach and 12 dozen golf balls. We have to look at things like that. I looked at adding some positions, subtracting some positions, increasing and decreasing some stipends. This is just some frame work that I am giving you. It can be tweaked a little bit, but I think it is much better than what exists. As far as addition to positions, definitely a freshman football coach at East and at West. Every year, for 3 years, I have had 35-40 kids come out for freshman football. We have over 120 kids in the football program between both schools and we are covering that with four coaches. We have 2 coaches trying to coach the varsity, 2 that are trying to coach the junior varsity and shuffling volunteers over to the freshman programs. It is not an ideal situation. Those are two areas where we need an increase in staff. Again, I try to balance it. We have Boys' Tennis at Cranston West. We struggled to fill the junior varsity team last year. We didn't need a coach. None of this is personal. They are all great people, but we didn't need them. Maybe that is an area that we can take away from. This is the long and short of what has gone into this. If you have any questions I would be

happy to answer them.

Mr. Balducci stated – This will be introduced in next year's budget. Currently this year's budget and as per Vin's (Mr. Varrecchione) recommendation, this is what the budget will look like next year ("See Handout "A").

Mr. Varrechione stated - I am willing to tweak the numbers a little bit more. I will have some coaches that will be upset when their pay goes down \$500.00 from the previous year.

Mrs. Ruggieri stated – Do you think will make us more competitive?

Mr. Varrechione stated – Yes.

Mr. Gale stated - Do you think we will end up losing coaches because you are reducing their pay?

Mr. Varrechione stated - That is the risk we take. This morning I went out to an appreciation breakfast that the Rhode Island Interscholastic League sponsored. As my guests, I took my two faculty managers. They are priceless, they really are.

One other position that I added was the Cranston East Cheerleading coach. Cranston East Cheerleading has been in the RI Interscholastic league the last several years. I am not sure what line item they are, but it is a varsity sport which is why I tried to move it into the Athletic item.

Mr. Traficante asked if Cranston West is competitive

Mrs. Ruggieri stated – No, West is not. East is competitive and they win.

Permit Policy - Jeannine Nota-Masse

Mrs. Nota-Masse stated – We have three policies to discuss. Permit

**Policy (See Handout “B” on file in the Superintendent’s Office)
Students Rights and Responsibilities in Interrogations and Searches
(See Handout “C” on file in the Superintendent’s Office). Both of
these are amendments to the current policies. The only changes are
in bold in your documents. There are just date issues so we can again
try and solidify these in classrooms before school begins and cut
back on requests once the school year has begun and kids are
settled in classes. The first year of implementation we allow people
to apply, but it needs to have the dates tightened. Once kids are
settled in class and people request movement, it puts us in a difficult
spot because as you know, in the center and eastern side of the city,
they are packed. We just want to expedite the process and make sure
everyone is settled before it begins.**

**Mr. Colford asked how many requests do we have for this year
(2014)?**

**Mrs. Ruggieri stated – It has been rolling. We have found out there
are more coming into October and we don’t want that. They should
know where they are going at that point and be at the school the day
school starts. We are trying to tighten that up so people understand
there is a deadline. The date is hard and there is no real wiggle room.**

**Mr. Colford asked if we had this in place this year, how many people
would have missed the July 1st deadline?**

**Mrs. Nota-Masse stated – I do not have hard numbers, but I can get
that data for you. Just to clarify, you want any new applications and
by category of siblings, cluster, etc?**

Mr. Colford stated – Yes.

Dr. Lundsten stated – Do you want them sent out in the update on Friday?

Mr. Colford state – Yes.

Mr. Gale stated - Yes that would be great.

Mr. Traficante stated - I am trying to compare the current policy that we passed in 2013. The kids that were permitted at the beginning of school, I believe started in grade 2?

Ms. Iannazzi stated – You are talking about the people that were grandfathered in.

Mrs. Nota-Masse stated – Nothing substantial really has changed, just the dates.

Mr. Gale stated – My only concern is that deadline of August 15, 2014. Families go on vacation, out of town, they might not get the letters and may not have time to respond. Is there any way we can lengthen that out to September 15th?

Mrs. Ruggieri stated - We want all the permit appeal hearings heard prior to the start of the year, not in October and November. We can't have a kid already in a school for two months and then have an appeal hearing. If the appeal is approved or denied, then that child moves in November. We do not want that.

Mr. Gale stated – My only concern is that I don't think it is enough time for a parent to respond. I understand the thinking behind it, but if we could go any later, I would appreciate that.

Mrs. Nota-Masse stated – That is up to you folks. You tell me.

Mr. Colford stated – What happens in a case where it goes to the

State and they are involved in determining that.

Mrs. Nota-Masse stated – It has been our experience that if we have a very clear, well communicated policy, they have upheld our decisions.

Mrs. Ruggieri stated – They have come back and stated where the child should go here during the appeal process. They (the State) determine their placement during the appeal process. This is just appeals to the School Committee; this is not an appeal to the State. We can't mandate that, only on our own appeals. That is another reason why we want to make sure they are done a little bit earlier so that we have a deadline for it and if it does need to go further, we are not in November doing a permit appeal. This way, it moves that process along as well.

Ms. Iannazzi stated – Going to Jeff's (Gale) point, and correct me if I am wrong, when a parent applies for a permit, they get the entire policy with the application. That is notice to them that they will have to change their school.

Mr. Gale stated – So they are informed a month ahead of time.

Mr. Traficante stated – Jeannine (Nota-Masse) why would you want to move the date back from May 1st to July 1st? I would think you would want it as early as possible.

Ms. Nota-Masse stated – Yes, May is rather early so we figured by July folks should have an idea if they are requesting a permit or the reason why.

Mr. Traficante stated – I would think it would be easier for you to get them in hand much earlier.

Mrs. Nota-Masse stated – Yes, a narrower window for us, but it allows parents extra time to make that decision.

Mrs. Ruggieri stated – They can put it in when they want, but we just want there to be a deadline. If you miss the deadline, you miss it.

Mrs. Nota-Masse stated – The effective date will be whenever the second reading is passed. We went through these policies and there was a delay in getting them on a work session. I will make sure that the date is whenever the second reading is.

Student Rights and Responsibilities in Interrogations and Searches – Jeannine Nota-Masse

The second policy - Student Rights and Responsibilities in Interrogations and Searches (See Handout “C” on file with the Superintendent’s Office). We have had several discussions over the last several years about dogs being used in our high schools and I guess potentially the middle schools if we felt it necessary. I have worked with Ron (Attorney Cascione) on making some policies around that because having this occur without a policy behind it is dangerous for us. Ron (Attorney Cascione) worked very closely with me on this to develop a policy that covers the use of trained dogs. We have not spoken at this point with the new Colonial regarding having this occur. We obviously wanted to talk to you folks about the policy and how it could impact things at our school.

Dr. Lundsten stated – I wanted to point out for clarification, they do use our building to train the dogs. They are not there to specifically look for any type of illegal substances from our kids. You may have seen cars and dogs at the high schools after school hours, they

notify us in advance.

Mr. Colford stated – Doesn't this open us up to some liability here with searching vehicles. Is it illegal search and seizure?

Mr. Traficante stated – The parking lot is City property, not school property.

Ms. Iannazzi stated – In loco parentis, if your child is on school grounds, the school has the care, custody and control and ability to access it.

Mrs. Nota-Masse stated – If a child is driving to school and parking their vehicle to go to school, their property is technically on school grounds. If a fight happens in the parking lot, we don't say "that's not our property." It is our responsibility.

Dr. Lundsten stated – The car is searched by one of our personnel, not by the police.

Mrs. Nota-Masse stated – The threshold for cars is a bit lower for administrators than it is for the police. Again, this stems from a couple of incidents that we have had with students bringing drugs and alcohol to school and leaving it in their car.

Mr. Traficate stated - I like the random search language.

Mrs. Ruggieri stated – When we started to look at this, we looked at other districts and what they were doing and there are several districts that have these policies in place, in their handbook and the expectation is there so nobody is surprised. When we looked at it, we looked at other districts to see what issues they may have had.

Mr. Traficante stated – It is kind of a deterrent. If they know you are going to have a random search, they are going to think twice.

Mrs. Nota-Masse stated – The principals are very eager to have this resource at their disposal.

Student Retention Policy – Jeannine Nota-Masse

Mrs. Nota-Masse stated - The Retention Policy is the third one (See Handout “D” on file with the Superintendent’s Office). We talked about the dilemma often faced by schools regarding retaining students and if parents disagree then who will have the ultimate say. We ran into a problem where for several years, one particular school a child was recommended for retention, the parent disagreed with the recommendation and so finally it did go to RIDE. It became an issue as to why the child was not retained earlier, whereby mitigating some of the issues. The dilemma was in the Principals lap where we didn’t have a policy making it their ultimate decision. This is the person that will be held responsible for the child’s progress as the years go on. The second paragraph talks about notification. Again, you have some dates here so the parents are notified in a timely manner and in writing. We have a letter crafted so that the Principals can give the parents a warning that their child is in danger and there is a chance they may be retained. It is a warning, not an official notice given out in April. The final decision is made on or about May 5 because we have determined that date is about when progress reports are sent out.

When I say the Principal, I mean we have data teams, we have RTI in place, the Principal I doubt would make a singular decision. That is why we talk about data and the review and interventions in place. In the case that I am referring to, several things had been put in place

and we were not successful. When the school had done its due diligence and the parent overrode and allowed the child to go on, the child still did not make any progress. Again by the time the child reaches middle school, it is a bigger problem.

Dr. Lundsten stated – We do have an arrangement with the Urban Collaborative in Providence where a child can attend middle school there and make that year up. They can still go with their original cohorts. So there are still opportunities that we offer the kids.

Mrs. Nota-Masse stated – At this time, we do not have a graduation requirement of a NECAP. When a standardized test comes back as a graduation requirement, we have the responsibility to make sure a child has all of the possible opportunities to be successful. If we are just moving kids along, we all know that they are not getting access to the curriculum for whatever issues they are having. Moving them on does them no good. It only exacerbates the problem and then they are in 11th grade and they potentially can't graduate because of something that happened and could have been fixed in 2nd grade.

Mr. Colford stated – What are the anticipated costs for No. 3 and No. 9 (See Handout "D").

Mrs. Nota-Masse stated – We have staff members who have translated for us. They translate documents for us for all our hearings. This is the law.

Dr. Lundsten stated – Even our Robocalls now, they designate on a card what their home language is.

Mrs. Nota-Masse stated – In rare circumstances, we may have to go outside of the school if it is a language we do not have access to. We

usually use the International Institute. They do it once and we keep it.

Mr. Colford: I guess we have a lot of these at the elementary level.

Mrs. Nota-Masse stated – No we do not, not for retention.

Dr. Lundsten stated – I look at that at the elementary level. If I see that, I call the principals and say I want to see the files and why this happened. There should not be 6 retentions in the 1st grade.

Mrs. Nota-Masse stated – Again, we try to make these decisions and notice the parents in a timely fashion to plan for the following year so parents are not caught behind the eight ball and neither are we.

Bamboo Project Proposed Resolution

Suzanne Arena and Kenneth Filarski presented on the proposed resolution for the Bamboo Project. (See Handout “E” on file in the Superintendent’s Office)

Mrs. Ruggier stated – I have a couple of changes that I think need to be made to the resolution. I do not think the language is clear enough that the School Department will not be responsible for any of the funding for this project. The project cannot move until the full funding is in place, which is a standard that we have for any project that comes on board outside of our budget. So for each phase that you have and I know you have quite a few, but the full funding must be in place before that phase can move forward.

Mr. Filarski asked if the funding for the whole project or just each phase?

Mrs. Ruggieri stated – I do not think it would be realistic to ask you to have millions of dollars in place now, but we do need to make it clear

that for each phase of the program before it moves forward, the full funding must be in place.

Mr. Filarski stated – Do you have proposed language? I think that is reasonable. The project will not go forward until it is funded anyway. Once we have approval here (School Committee) then we go over there (City Council).

Mrs. Ruggier stated – That would be one piece. Then talking about the learning and earnings part, I think we need some clarity as to who will be responsible for the oversight of that business piece of this. The last piecethe Cranston School Committee recommends that the City of Cranston..... we can't recommend anything to the City of Cranston so that needs to be removed.

Mr. Colford stated – Don't they need that to go forward?

Mrs. Ruggieri stated – They are asking that we recommend access to and use of land that we do not have any claim to, so we can't.

Mr. Colford stated – I think it should read that we are okay with the program.

Mrs. Ruggieri stated – If you want to add “in conjunction with the City of Cranston” would be fine but that last piece can't be used.

Mr. Traficante stated – With respect to the third paragraph, you should add in there “the City and the City Council”. They are part of the project and it is their property.

Dr. Lundsten stated – Do you want me to have Gail find the wording from the Lacrosse resolution?

Mrs. Ruggieri stated – Yes, that would be great.

Adjourn Public Work Session

**A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Gale; seconded by Mr. Colford.
All were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

**Andrea M. Iannazzi,
Chairperson**